



THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

Issue 14

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THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

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HAPPY RAMADAN!

Dear Readers of the Islamic Bulletin,

With this issue we will endeavor to inform, inspire, unite, and excite our readers for the promotion and encouragement of Islam. We hope that with Allah's help we will be able to increase the knowledge of new members to Islam, as well as provide continued learning and inspiration to those born to Islam.

To the best of our abilities, we seek to provide examples and explanations of the five pillars of Islam and various aspects of Islamic belief and practice in every issue of the Bulletin. To this end we offer such features as **Teachings of the Prophet, Qur'anic Miracles, Qur'anic Sciences**, and **Hadith** for your reading pleasure.

We strive to keep abreast of current affairs that directly or indirectly affect the Muslim world and its peoples through **Islamic World News**. This includes local, national, and international events. Our newsletter focuses strictly on Islamic issues and does not make political statements.

Kids' Corner is designed for the interest and learning of children as well as parents. You'll also find topics of general interest such as: **Women in Islam** which focuses on women's issues and experiences, **Cooks' Corner** to share with readers delicious recipes contributed by our staff and in accordance with Islamic traditions, and **Why I Embraced Islam** to express the awe and gratitude for Allah's mercy of those not born to Islam but allowed to accept the beauty of Islam into their lives.

Our many thanks to Allah for allowing us the opportunity to make this newsletter possible. It has become popular here in the United States and read in many foreign countries. At an Islamic School in London, England, the Bulletin is used as part of their earning curriculum. In addition, permission was given to a publisher in India to translate the Bulletin into other languages.

We currently mail approximately 700 copies of the newsletter free of subscription charges to prison inmates throughout the United States, and the number of Muslim converts in prison continues to increase. This is a very important aspect of the newsletter, as it may be the only access some of these Muslims have to information about Islam. Our newsletter has become very popular as a means of *dahwa* (invitation) to Islam.

We realize that we have been remiss in a consistent publication of the newsletter; not due to lack of enthusiasm but only because of financial difficulties. All of the writers and editors work voluntarily to spread and teach Islam. We therefore ask our readers who wish to remain subscribers to please send in their \$20 subscription fee which covers printing and postage costs. As we update our mailing list for 1997 we want you to be included, so please send in any change of address along with your \$20 fee.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear Editor,

Assalamu Alaikum

I have been reading and following your magazine articles since I started receiving them. You have a variety of topics in your magazine and a broad group of readers. Within my 5 year stay in the USA, I have been very privileged to pray and visit most of the masjids in the Bay Area and also to listen to the "Bayans" (talks) from a variety of speakers and imams.

One thing that has remained consistent over all these years is listening to our brothers and imams in "Bayan" referencing the ways of the disbelievers as "THE AMERICAN WAY". Even though I am not an American by birth, I find this phrase insulting. Being an American is not a different religion nor should we treat this like one.

When we talk about Muslims owning liquor shops and other haram places, we don't refer to them as "THE PAKISTANI WAY", even though there are Muslim brothers from Pakistan in this business. Or when we talk about adultery and shirk, we don't refer to them as the "ARAB WAY". My point is that these should not be referenced and targeted to any one specific country. Instead words like "Non-Believers" or "Disbelievers" can be used. This way, reference is made across the board and not to one specific group of people

We in Fairfield (and in other places) have been very fortunate to have a mixed culture of people (including Americans) use our Masjid and take part in our programs. We should be very careful that we do not alienate any one group of people.

I hope that this message is read and at least understood by all brothers giving "Bayan" in any masjid in the USA.

A. Shakeel

Fairfield, C

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TRIP TO PERU



Alhamdulillah, five brothers from San Francisco left to visit the Muslim community in Lima, Peru for the purpose of spreading Islam. We had no idea if there were any masjids or even if we would encounter any Muslims at all. We were a bit apprehensive but put our trust in Allah that everything would go well. One of the brothers amongst us was fluent in Spanish and was used as a mouth-piece in translating and talking to the local people.

We arrived in Lima, Peru around 6:30pm and immediately offered our Asr prayers. We then looked for a Muslim-sounding name in the local phone book at the airport. To our surprise the person who answered the phone was the person in charge of the mosque in Lima, Peru. His name was Saeed and insisted on picking us at the airport. We told him that we would take a taxi. We were so happy and relieved to find out that there was a masjid. The masjid, which was a huge house with twelve rooms, was donated by an Arab brother. We arrived at the masjid and were greeted by Saeed, a Palestinian who had been living in Peru for the last 45 years and Juan, the masjid caretaker. They had prepared tea and fruits for us.

Peru is a gigantic country of well over 24 million people. In the capital city of Lima, there are approximately 400 Muslims. Most of the Muslims in Peru are originally a mix of Palestinians and Syrians who left their homelands searching for a better economic life for their families. Evidently, they found what they were searching for because the majority of the Muslim brothers in Peru are industrious and financially well-off. However, due to the lack of practicing their religion, these brothers have secularly been away from Islam and their children are either non-Muslim or Muslims by name only. Overall, the people are very nice, good hearted and hospitable but they have fundamentally segregated themselves from Islam. Unfortunately, many Muslims have even adopted the local traditions and religion.



Mosque of Lima, Peru

One of the first Muslims we visited in Peru was brother Issa, the President of the masjid. He was sick when we visited him so we offered him some Zamzam water. He immediately felt better. We were invited to many Muslim houses and received such nice hospitality. Some Muslim brothers came from remote areas and as far away as a 2-hour flight from Tacna (located near Chile) to see us. More than 20 Pakistani brothers there are involved in the car business and their wives, masha-Allah, are very conservative and observe the Hijab.

At Jumha prayers, the talks are usually bilingual in both Arabic and Spanish. It was directly after Jumha salat that 3 brothers in Lima had embraced Islam, Alhamdulillah. Many of the Muslim brothers in Peru related their stories to us on how they outlived the many difficulties in their life and on how Allah protected and directed them to Islam. Many of these brothers had wholeheartedly made their intentions for continuing the effort of spreading Islam. The qualities of good Muslims so undeniably shine.

We had a visit from one man named Khalid who came and told us his early life story. He also had several questions to ask us. He seemed to be an Arab but had an unfortunate incident of being separated from his family.



Mosque Bab ul Islam, Tacna, Peru

It was amazing how Allah (swt) protected him. After a few meetings with us learning about Islam, he decided that he wanted to become Muslim.

Another Peruvian brother stated that the country of Peru is emerging from Dunya (worldly pleasures) and thus fertile for Islam. In addition, there were a few Peruvian ladies who embraced Islam and said that they liked what Islam offers women in today's modern life.

On the other hand, the Muslims who migrated to Peru for the sake of worldly pleasures are now so engrossed in seeking fortunes to such an extent that there is no difference between the Muslims and non-Muslims. Unfortunately, many of our brothers in Peru who were originally of Palestinian and Syrian descent have blended in well enough in the pursuit of fortune to the point that they have lost their Islamic identity. They no longer are practicing Muslims and as a result, their children are now being raised as non-Muslims. This is a very big lesson for all of us. Allah has said in the Quran:

“And those who strive in Our (cause), -We will certainly guide them to Our paths, for verily Allah is with those who do right.”

(Quran 29:69)

On our final day in Peru, the local brothers cooked an outdoor lunch for us. Many of the non-Muslim neighbors who had seen our gathering decided to stop by and join us. Alhamdulillah, all went well and enjoyable. We really had a very rewarding experience in Peru. The Muslim brothers were sad to see us leave. Our final day was made even more special when before leaving, four Peruvian men who had joined our lunch decided to become Muslims. Alhamdulillah.



Mosque Bab ul Islam, Tacna, Peru

SEARCHING FOR MY ROOTS

(Brother Khaled tells his story to one of the brothers in the group.)

My name is Khaled Abdullah Al-Khaly; or it may be some other name. You see, I really do not know for sure. Let me relate to you something of my past so that you might be able to understand me better. I have an inscription on my chest that I have had since I was very young.

I remember noticing the inscription on my chest in a mirror when I was about five years old. The inscription is in Arabic and gives a name -- (Khaled Abdullah Al Khaly) the name of a great desert, or the name of a city (Rubh Al-Khaly), a year (1960), and the crescent and star of Islam.

I do not know or remember when the inscription was tattooed on my chest.

For some reason I was taken from the Middle East to Mexico at an early age and given a Spanish name. I do not know who my parents are so I cannot ask them these questions. This mystery is the reason why I am in search of the truth before I die.

I will relate to you some old memories that exist inside my head. These are memories of my youth. I have never forgotten these reoccurring images of my past and they have become the oldest memories that I have of my life.

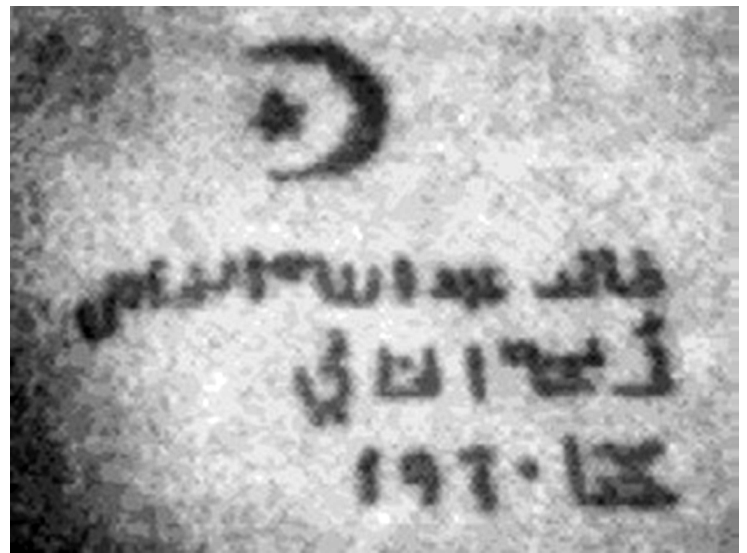
I am about 4 years old. I am in the desert. I can see many men dressed in black. There are so many that I cannot count them. They are mounted on horses, their faces are covered, and they are carrying swords. It is night and I can hear people screaming in agony, in pain, and in fright. I can also hear men talking but I cannot understand what they say.

There is fire everywhere. I see people hiding, running, and defending themselves from the men and the fire

I am suddenly grabbed by the arm and taken away. It seems that I cannot move fast enough because my feet are sinking into the sand. I cannot make out the face of the person who is leading me but I am taken to a group of men standing away from the fire

The men are strong and tall but I can only see their backs. I remember turning around and seeing the large streaks of fire burning the town and hearing the voices of terror in the distance. I was then mounted and taken away on a white horse. I do not know if the person with me was a man or a woman. I turned around and could see many people on horses following us.

Soon, I see hills. Yes, I remember seeing hills. I then remember being inside of a basket with many small openings. From these openings I could see people moving about. I was in the basket for a very long time and I could feel the pressure of being held captive because I could not force



myself out. Every once in a while someone would open the lid of the basket and hand me some bread.

I have another memory. Someone is holding me in their arms. At first I could not see the face but then she removes the head covering and I see tears. She is crying for me with much tenderness in her heart. I will never forget those eyes. Those eyes have been recorded permanently in my mind. Sometimes I wonder if those were the eyes of my mother.

I remember that there were many people around us as she was holding me. Suddenly, she gave me to one of the men. I remember fighting and screaming because I felt attached to this woman. I did not want to leave her arms.

Later, I remember seeing a large cargo ship. I could smell the sea water and I could see men carrying sacks of clothes and baskets on their heads. I then notice a man that looks different from the rest of the people. He is wearing white clothes and a white hat. The man is tall and looks English. He looks at me and smiles.

I am now on the ship. I know that I am on a ship because the food, the candles, and the people sitting next to me seem to be rocking. I am on this ship for a very long time. I can not see the sun so I do not know if it is day or night.

In a few days or weeks we arrive in a city, but because of my youth I do not know what city it is. I came to know later on that the city was somewhere in Mexico. In Mexico, for some reason, I was given to an old man named Faruk. I only remember his name and something interesting that he told me. He told me that he was a descendent of the pharaohs.

I lived with Faruk for a short time. Faruk died a few months later. Before his death he told me to remember that their was only one God to honor and that God was Allah. Those are the only words I remember Faruk telling me.

There were two other children living with us. I think that they might have been my brother and sister but I am not certain. We were all about the same age.

When Faruk died we were separated and to this day I do not know what ever happened to them. I was then taken in by a Mexican family.

I remember living with this Mexican family for some time. I knew that they were not my real family because I could sense that the love a mother and father have for their child was missing in their kindness towards me. I lived with two other families. All the families were Catholic.

One of the families had two children and they took good care of me. I was taken everywhere with them. By this time the memories of my past were slowly fading. I was being acculturated in Mexican society and taken to church on a regular basis.

However, I never felt comfortable in church and was never forced to participate. I believe that it was through the great power of Allah that my heart was being kept from church until I discovered the gift of Islam.

This gift came in the form of Islamic images of Muslims praying on television. It was from these brothers on television that I learned how to pray. You see, there are not many Muslims in Mexico and I never understood the adoration of the saints or the virgin of Guadalupe. I felt more comfortable copying the Muslims on television than the Catholics in church.

For years I tried to figure out what the inscription on my chest signified but no one around me knew how to read Arabic. One day, I finally met a man who could read Arabic. This man deciphered the tattoo and gave me some hope of finally figuring out my past. The information was significant and made me contemplate life for a very long time.

Soon, I made up my mind to leave Mexico.

Approximately ten years ago I decided to take destiny into my own hands. I stowed away on a ship heading towards the Middle East so that I could find some answers to my past. However, the ship stopped in Peru for ten days. I could not withstand the hunger for that long of time so I jumped off.

I have been in Peru ever since. I am poor so I do not have any plans to go to the Middle East in the near future.

Throughout my life, however, I have had two recurring dreams that I feel are important and symbolize something of my past. In one dream, I am high atop a mountain feeling a cold breeze blow as I look out onto the land below. My curiosity grows from atop the mountain and I begin to descend. I begin to see thousands of people but I cannot make-out their faces because they are covered.

They have long clothing that covers their bodies. I try desperately to see their faces but I cannot. I begin to advance through the thousands of people. With every step, they spread themselves open to let me through.

When I reach the center, I see their leader or someone I believe is the leader. The person is in agony and dying. This person has a sock that is weathered by time. On his skin I see injuries of some sort.

I think in my heart, "the poor man must be suffering", then another man holds me by the arm and tells me that I have to put the sock on.

Fear fills my being as I think that maybe the sickness the man is suffering will one day strike me because I am wearing his socks. I think of Allah and believe that Allah will keep me away from harm's way.

The men then take me and slip the dying man's socks on my feet. When the socks are fitted on me the men take me and raise me above their heads to place me on a pyre of fire so as to test my strength. I am brought down and the thousands of people suddenly fall on their knees towards me in adoration.

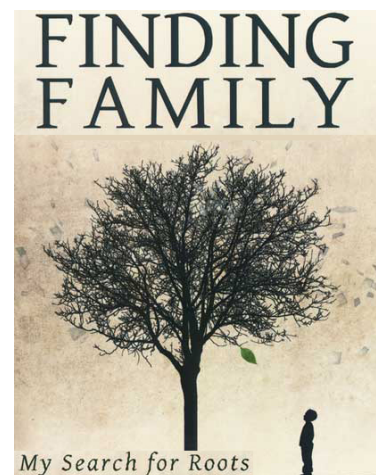
A man that is by my side says that with these socks I will have great power and many children. The thousands of people remain in reverence of me. This is a dream that has reoccurred many times in my life. I am searching for interpretations of my dream.

Another dream that reoccurs takes place as I am climbing a mountain. When I reach the mountain top I see thirteen white horses and horsemen. One of the men dismounts and raises me towards him. The man then places a crown on my head. I am delighted of this act but then the crown is transformed into a thin simple crown that is placed in front of three rocks or three diamonds. The rocks are in the shape of pyramids and each pyramid is of three colors; green, white, and violet.

I do not know what these dreams mean. I do believe, however, that they are related to my vague past. I am sure that there is someone out there in this present world that might have an answer to my past life.

I am a man searching for his family, a homeland, and answers of my past. If anyone has the slightest knowledge of what I have said please let your heart guide you towards me. And may Allah, the all powerful, enlighten your decision to help me.

IMPORTANT REMINDER



We at the Islamic Bulletin would like to assist our brother Khaled in re-uniting him with his mother and family. We urge every-one to share this information.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact: Editor of The Islamic Bulletin, P.O. Box 410186, San Francisco, CA 94141-0186.

RAMADAN MUBARAK!

HAPPY RAMADAN!

The month of Ramadan has once again begun. This month is a very special time in a Muslim's heart and soul. It is a time that Allah has bestowed much blessings in our lives. It is also a time for forgiveness, repentance, and an opportunity to earn countless rewards.

It is very important to increase one's worship during Ramadan by reading Quran, praying 'extra' prayers--such as Tahajjud and Taraweeh, and being kind and doing good deeds. These good habits during Ramadan should also, God-willing, continue after the month of fasting has ended.

Fasting develops self-control and helps us to overcome selfishness, greed, laziness and other faults. It is an annual training program to refresh us for carrying out our duties towards the Almighty, the Creator and Sustainer. Fasting gives us the feeling of hunger and thirst. We experience for ourselves what it is like to have an empty stomach. This develops our feeling for the poor and hungry people.

Fasting teaches us to control the love of comfort. Also, it helps us to keep our sexual desires within control. Hunger, comfort, and sex are three factors which must be kept under control to behave as the Almighty's servants.

The purpose of fasting is to make a Muslim able to control his passions, so that he becomes a person of good deeds and intentions. Anger, a common human weakness, can also be brought under control by fasting. A Muslim is expected to keep away from all bad actions during his fast. He should not lie, break a promise or do any deceitful act.

On both the individual and social levels, fasting has many virtues and benefits. Of these we can mention the feeling of sympathy for the poor. After all, man's sense of compassion springs from his feeling of pain, and fasting is a practical means to develop compassion in his spirit. In this regard, it is reported that Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) was

the most generous among people, and he was especially generous during Ramadan.

Moreover, fasting establishes equality among the rich and the poor. In a way, it is a compulsory experience of poverty in that it is meant to make all people share an equality, not diversity, of feeling and to sympathize with one another through a collective sense of pain, not through a discord or diversity of desires. It is also during fasting that Muslims can really sympathize with the starving people everywhere in the world and see the hardship that they go through everyday of their lives.

However, the mere abstinence from food and drink is not the real meaning of fasting that God enjoined on the righteous.

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) declares: **"God does not accept the fasting of those who do not restrain themselves from telling falsehood or from doing false deeds."** The basic truth of fasting in Islam springs from God's Watch over the faster, as well as the latter's carrying out of his fast for the cause of none but God.

To this effect, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) explains: **"God will forgive all the sins of those who fast during Ramadan out of true belief and in anticipation of God's Reward in the Hereafter."**

Fasting also promotes the Islamic form of sociability. Muslims are urged to invite others to break the fast with them at sunset, to gather for the Qur'anic study, prayer and visitations. This provides a better chance for socialization in a brotherly and spiritual atmosphere.

Hazrat Zaid bin Khalid al-Juhani (R.A.A.) related that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said: **Anybody who offers meal for the breaking of the fast of another person, earns the same merit as the one who was observing the fast without diminishing in any way the recompense of the fasting person. (Tirmizi)**

A quote from another Hadith states: **"The month of Ramadan is the month of endurance and the reward for endurance is paradise. It is a month whose beginning is mercy, whose middle is forgiveness and whose end is freedom from hell."**

EAT DATES - THEY ARE GOOD FOR YOU!



During the month of Ramadan, there is an abundance of dates everywhere we turn. There is good reason for this, as Muslims generally break their fast by eating dates.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said, **"If any one of you is fasting, let him break his fast with dates. In case he does not have them, then with water. Verily water is a purifier."**

The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to break his fast by eating dates before offering the Maghrib prayer, and if ripe dates were not available, he would substitute them with dried ones. When even these were not available, he used to have a few sips of water, according to some accounts. Dates contain sugar, fat, and proteins, as well as important vitamins. Hence the great importance attached to them by the Prophet (PBUH).

Regarding the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) breaking his fast with fresh dates, dried dates, or even water, there is of course a subtle reason for this. Since dates travel faster to the liver and are converted more quickly than other nutrients, particularly if they are moist, the liver accepts their contents more readily and hastens their distribution to the rest of the body, which is thirsting for energy. So dates are the perfect food with which to break the fast, since they quickly supply the body with the energy it needs.

Dates are also rich in natural fibers and therefore the eating of them helps to fight many of the ailments with which we commonly suffer today. Modern medicine has shown that eating dates is effective in helping to prevent abdominal cancer. Dates also surpass other fruits in the sheer variety of their constituents. They are the most wholesome food among fruits because of their hot and moist substance. Eating dates in the morning on an empty stomach kills intestinal worms and other parasites, for dates have an antidotal potency which inhibits their growth. Dates contain calcium, sulphur, iron, potassium, phosphorus, manganese, copper, magnesium, and volatile oils.

Dates and date palms are mentioned in the Qur'an 20 times, thus showing their importance. The Prophet (PBUH) likened a good Muslim to the date palm saying, **"Among trees, there is a tree like a Muslim. Its leaves do not fall."**

Dates were the food Almighty Allah provided for Sayyidah Maryam (Allah be pleased with her) when she felt labor pains and after she gave birth to Jesus (PBUH) under the palm tree. Allah Almighty revealed to her the following:

"Shake the trunk of the palm tree, and it will drop ripe dates on you, so eat, drink, and comfort your eyes with what Allah gave you." (Qur'an 19:25)

Experiments have also shown that dates contain some stimulants which strengthen the muscles of the uterus in the last months of pregnancy. This helps the dilation of the uterus at the time of delivery and reduces post-natal bleeding.

Dieticians consider dates the best food for breast-feeding mothers. This is because dates contain elements that assist in alleviating depression and enrich the breast milk with the nutrients needed to make the child healthy and resistant to disease.

Another factor making dates the ideal food is their digestibility. Within half an hour of eating them, the tired body regains new vigor. The reason for this is that low blood sugar is the main cause of hunger, not an empty stomach as is often assumed.

When the body absorbs the nutritional essence of a few dates the sensation of hunger is abated. Many who break the fast with dates afterwards find themselves unable to eat much. It would seem that taking dates after fasting helps one avoid overeating.

Aishah (R.A.) used to prescribe dates for those suffering with giddiness. It is now well known that low blood sugar and low blood pressure are among the causes of giddiness.

She was also reported to have used dates combined with cucumber to treat her over-slim condition. She said "they fed me with every type of food to gain weight, yet I did not put any on. Then they added cucumber and fresh date to my diet and that did it."

As previously mentioned, dates are rich in several vitamins and minerals. When the level of trace elements in the body falls, the health of the blood vessels is affected, which leads to increased heart rate and a consequent inability of the heart to perform its functions with normal efficiency. As dates are rich in calcium, they contribute to healthy bones. For this reason it is recommended that children and older adults, especially women, eat plenty of dates to strengthen their bones.

Dates are also important in maintaining good vision and are effective in guarding against night-blindness. In the early years of Islam, dates were served as food for Muslim soldiers. As the best stimulant of the muscles, they are the best food for one about to engage in battle.

The Prophet (PBUH) would sometimes combine dates with bread. At other times he mixed ripe dates with cucumbers or combined dates with ghee. He took all varieties of dates, but preferred the variety called 'ajwah.

Dates are variously classified as food, drink, fruits, sweets, nutrients, and medicine. Cured dates are called 'ajwah in Arabic. Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) related the saying of Allah's Messenger (PBUH), "Ajwah date is an excellent remedy." (Reported by Bukhari and Muslim)

According to another narration, **"Ajwah date is certainly an excellent and sufficient food."** Dates are also among the fruits of Paradise, as noted in the hadith:

"Ajwah is from Paradise and contains an antidote against poison." (Reported by at-Tirmidhi)

WHAT IS ISLAM?

We are providing this section for our new brother and sisters so that they may have more information regarding the teachings of Islam; the religion of absolute submission to the one God; Allah.

We sincerely hope that you will benefit from it, and that it may deepen your knowledge and increase your interest in Islam. Although we live in the twentieth century - in probably the most secular and irreligious age in history - many of us are still inclined to stop from time to time to think about religion. And yet we find that there are so many different opinions about religion. Religions seem to cling fanatically to their own beliefs. Each in turn seems to claim that it possesses all truth, while all others are lost in hopeless error.

In an age torn by hatred, war and strife among the races, many of us look back to religion for guidance to peace and brotherhood and are disappointed when we find in most of them intolerance and narrowness of spirituality.

So, we may ask, is there a religion which teaches the Oneness of God and the oneness of mankind, and yet, at the same time is tolerant of other points of view? This is exactly the teaching of Islam. In fact, Islam teaches that this message of the Oneness of God and the brotherhood of all races is the original message which Allah sent to all prophets and religions since the dawn of human history.

However, man has changed this original teaching of Oneness and developed out of numerous mutually antagonistic sects. As Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, the revelation of Allah to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh):

"And verily this Ummah of yours is a single Ummah and I am your Lord, and Cherisher: therefore fear Me (and no other). But people have cut off their affair (of unity), between them into sects: each party rejoices in that which is with itself. " (Quran 23:52-53)

Islam still preserves this teaching of the Oneness of God and the brotherhood of all mankind. Islam seeks to implement this spirit among all races, and yet, at the same time, remains tolerant and respectful of all other heavenly religions and their followers who share the belief in the One and only God. The Holy Qur'an teaches:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects Tagut and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things." (Qur'an 2:256)

THE MEANING OF ISLAM

It is false to call Islam Mohammedanism, as has been done so frequently in the West. We have already pointed out that Muslims believe that Islam is the eternal message which Allah sent to all prophets, peace be upon them, from the dawn of mankind, and not a new belief which began with the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Muslims call their religion Islam, and the Arabic word Islam implies the attainment of peace through submission to Al-

lah. The word Muslim is an adjective derived from the noun Islam, and implies one who has peace within himself from his submission to Allah.

Muslims believe in the One, Eternal God, Who created the heavens and the earth and all that exists. In Arabic, God is called Allah. There is absolutely no difference between Allah and the God of Abraham, Moses and Jesus, peace be upon them all. Muslims do not believe that Prophet Muhammad was the only Prophet; rather they believe that he was the last of the Prophets of the Old and New Testaments. The Holy Qur'an is the revealed and sacred scripture of Islam, and it teaches:

"Say Ye: 'We believe in Allah and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: and we submit to Allah.'" (Qur'an 2:136)

SOME BASIC BELIEFS OF ISLAM

The most fundamental concept of Islam and the backbone of all its other principles and practices is the Oneness of God - tawhiid. Islam is monotheism in its purest form, and the logic of pure monotheism is the thread which runs through the entire fabric of the Islamic way of life. Islam teaches a fundamental difference between Allah, the Creator and that which He has created. The sky, the moon, the stars, the harmony and perfection of the natural world, the grace and beauty of the human body and the excellence of the human mind, the alternation of day and night, the change of the seasons, and the mystery of life and death all point to something beyond, greater than themselves. To the believer these are all signs (ayaat) of Allah. Islam teaches that Allah is not to be likened to anything which He has created. He is All-Powerful, All-Knowing. He is beyond any imperfection, and is the fulfillment of all Perfection. He is not a substance, nor is He like any of His creatures. He is not a far away and distant God, nor is He an unapproachable ideal. He is All-Kind, All-Merciful, and All-Compassionate.

Islam teaches that Allah is eternal. He was not Himself begotten, nor has He, in turn begotten a son or a daughter. Islam rejects the concept of the incarnation of God, which is found in Hinduism, Christianity, and other religions, and believes that the concept of incarnation limits the concept of God and destroys the believer's conviction of God's Activeness and Perfection.

The Qur'an describes Allah being perfect and active:

"Allah, there is no god except He. The Living, the Everlasting. Neither dozing nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Who is he that shall intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what will be before their hands and what was behind them. And they do not comprehend anything of His knowledge except what He willed. His Seat surrounds the heavens and earth. The preserving of them does not tire Him. He is the All High, the All-Glorious. " (Qur'an 2:255)

Islam rejects the notion that Jesus (PBUH) was the son of God. Rather it honors and respects him as one of the great

messengers and prophets of Allah to the Children of Israel.

Islam rejects the concept of trinity and considers it a contradiction of pure monotheism. It also rejects the argument of some Christians that God made Himself incarnate in Jesus, peace be upon him, so that God could be known by men, and also rejects the argument that Jesus, peace be upon him, died on the cross for mankind's sins. To begin with, Islam believes that man can come to know Allah and feel close to Him by means of proper prayer, fasting, charity, pilgrimage, and righteous deeds. The very practice of Islam is meant to purify the believer's soul and to bring him/her closer to Allah. With regard to the second argument, Islam teaches no human being can bear the burden of another's responsibility.

Allah is very aware of our human weaknesses and imperfection. He does not condemn us because we are created imperfect; rather He guides us to self-perfection and He forgives us and showers His Mercy upon us when we fail and then ask His forgiveness sincerely.

Muslims believe in the divine origin of the Old and New Testaments, although Muslims doubt the historical authenticity of some parts of the Old and New Testaments and do not believe them to be exact representations of what Allah originally revealed. The Qur'an upheld this view of the text of the Old and New Testaments hundreds of years ago, and in recent years, this view has been upheld by textual studies of biblical scholars. Muslims believe in the Angels of Allah, and His Prophets, peace be upon them. They believe in the resurrection of the dead at the end of the world; they believe in the coming of the Day of Judgement and eternal life in Paradise or Hell.

Although Muslims believe that Allah is All-Powerful and maintains complete control over His creation, they also believe that Allah has created man with free will and the ability to choose and act, and that Allah is just in making man morally responsible for what man does during his/her lifetime. It is false to say that Islam teaches its followers to resign meekly and passively to whatever is their fate or destiny. Rather Islam challenges the believer to fight against wrong and oppression and to strive for the establishment of righteousness and justice.

FAITH IN ACTION

Faith without action is a dead letter. Islam teaches us that faith by itself is not enough until it is transformed into action. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

"Faith does not depend on raising hopes, but it is something which is firmly established in the heart and testified to by action. Indeed, there are people who have been deceived by their hopes, so that they finally leave this world without merit. They used to say, 'We have good expectations from Allah.' Yet they only deceived themselves. For had they truly placed good expectations in Allah, they would have excelled in good deeds."

Each Muslim is taught that he/she is personally responsible for his/her own actions, both in this world and in the hereafter. Islam teaches that every individual must carry the re-

sponsibility of his/her own actions and that no one can carry that burden for them.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

Islam teaches that the woman is not inherently inferior to man; rather man and woman are of similar nature. They both are equal in intellectual and spiritual capacity. Furthermore, they are both equally responsible for their deeds before Allah.

It is also true that Islam regards the woman as having a primary role to play in the constitution and running of the family. Islam places great emphasis on the role of the Muslim woman as a wife and particularly as a mother, and Muslims are often of the opinion that the best position for the woman is in the home with her children and family. However, the Muslim woman is not prohibited from leaving her home to pursue education, a teaching profession, or other worthwhile and constructive goals which profit not only her but society as well. The Qur'an establishes the spiritual equality and mutual responsibility of man and woman in verses like the following:

"And whoever does deeds of righteousness, whether male or female, and is a believer, such will enter Paradise, and they will not be wronged even a small thing like the spot on a date-stone." (Qur'an 4:124)

"And their Lord answered them, 'Indeed I suffer not the work of any worker, male or female, to be lost. You are equal to each other.'" (Qur'an 3:195)

The relationship of the Muslim man to his wife is not that of master to slave. Rather the entire responsibility of economic support is placed on the shoulders of the man alone and he cannot demand of his wife that she also become economically productive to support the family, although she is able to do this if she desires.

The Qur'an enunciates this responsibility of men to women in the following verse:

"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, for that Allah has preferred one over the other in bounty, and because they support them from their means. So righteous women are obedient, guarding in secret what Allah has guarded." (Qur'an 4:34)

The important point that should be made is that Islam has great respect for the woman. It does not teach that she is without a soul or that she is the root of all evil or that she is inferior to man and must be kept in seclusion and subjugation. It is also worthy of mention that the Qur'an does not teach that man fell from Paradise because of the temptation of Eve. Rather the Qur'an directs all the responsibility toward Adam himself, while adding that Allah turned to Adam in mercy and forgave him his sin. Therefore, Adam's sin stops with Adam himself, and Allah, who is the Beneficent and the Merciful, does not hold mankind responsible for the sin of Adam.

We cannot deny that the condition of women has at times been regrettable in the Muslim world, as well as in the rest of the world at large. We do not wish to justify these circumstances, but only to make the point that they did not

originate from the teachings of Islam itself.

BROTHERHOOD AND EQUALITY OF MANKIND

Islam teaches that the human family is one, that there is no superiority of white over black or black over white. Islam rejects radically all notions of racial prejudice and teaches that the only basis of distinction between human beings is their individual moral qualities.

The concept of Islamic brotherhood has two primary dimensions; the relationship of Muslims to Muslims and the relationship of Muslims to non-Muslims. As for the first category Islam teaches that the brotherhood between all Muslim is to be absolute and total. The Arab has no privileges over the non-Arab, and, since there is no clergy or priesthood in Islam, all Muslims are basically equal, from top to bottom, from rich to poor, from educated to uneducated.

As for the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims, the teaching of Islam is that this is to be a relationship of mutual respect and particularly of tolerance. It is preferable that Muslims and non-Muslims live in peace, protect each other, and cooperate with each other. As the Qur'an says: "There is no compulsion in religion ..." (Qur'an 2:256) and "You have your religion and I have mine." (Qur'an 109:6)

REASON

Muslims consider their religion to be very rational and consistent with the dictates of the believing and reasoning mind. Furthermore, the Qur'an teaches that the rational faculty is one of the greatest gifts of Allah to man, and it encourages us to use this faculty and to develop it. Islam does not ask its followers to believe and then follow everything blindly and unquestioningly. The Quran says, for instance:

"And if you are in doubt about what We have send down to Our worshipper, then bring a chapter like it, and call your witnesses besides Allah, if you are truthful." (Qur'an 2:23)

Islam encourages reasoning, thought and personal opinion. The Prophet (PBUH) said: **"The differences of opinion among the learned of my followers are Allah's mercy." Islam has great respect for learning science and for man's exploration of the secrets of nature and of creation. In fact Allah challenges man on many occasions in the Qur'an to deepen his faith, knowledge, and wisdom from study and contemplation of the natural world, its harmony, symmetry, and beauty. For example:**

"He it is who created the seven heavens in harmony. Never can you see a lack of symmetry in the creation of the Compassionate. So look yet again, can you perceive any flaw? Then look again, and still another time; your vision will return unto you weakened and dim." (Qur'an 67:3-4)

The individual capacities and unique abilities of people are a gift of Allah, to be developed, perfected, and used for the benefit of humanity. Islam does not try to crush the individuality of its believers, but rather to guide each believer to perfection and purify his own uniqueness. This multiplicity of expressive and developed personalities enriches society

and places it on a higher level, like the beauty of an intricate but unified arabesque

ISLAMIC ATTITUDE TOWARDS WAR

In the eyes of some commentators on Islam in the West, Islam has been portrayed as a militant religion, a religion of blood, fire, and sword. We have already tried to draw attention to the fundamental concern of Islam for tolerance and religious freedom, and have also commented upon the emphasis Islam places on peace and cooperation among mankind. However, Islam is a practical religion, a religion which never ignores for a single moment the complexities and demands of the harsh realities and facts of life.

Islam is fundamentally concerned with establishing societies in which the rights of freedom of belief, human rights, and protection of life, dignity, and property are secure from both internal and external threats.

Therefore, Islam teaches its followers to be merciful and inclined toward forgiveness and peace even in times of war.

Islam therefore stipulates principles which Muslims are to follow before, during, and after war. Peace is to be established on the basis of justice. Muslims are not to be aggressive or to violate treaties which they have concluded with others, but war is to be waged in defence of the Muslim community and what it stands for. During war, there is to be no killing of civilians and those who do not participate directly in the war. Prisoners are to be treated humanely. Destruction of lands, fruit trees, animals, and towns and villages is to be avoided. Muslims are to be inclined to peace if the enemy is truthfully inclined to peace, and they are to make treaties and agreements to preserve that peace and then observe those treaties as long as the enemy observes them. The concept of 'jihad' is one of the highest concepts in Islam. The term has at times been translated as 'Holy War'. However, this translation is incomplete for Jihad also means by language 'struggling'. It is a concept which places great emphasis on activism and self-sacrifice, although it does not apply to sacrifice in war alone. The Prophet (PBUH) said that the greatest jihad is the striving of the Muslim to purify himself. The lesser jihad consists of all the striving the Muslim does in his external life, charity, righteous living and acts, the constant effort to achieve the Right Path in his dealings with his fellow men. This is true striving in the Way of Allah.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

Islam sets down five principle duties which are obligatory upon all Muslims, and form the structure, or pillars, of his/her life. They are:

1. Belief in the Oneness of Allah, and the bearing of witness to this belief by the words. "I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, and that Muhammad is His Prophet and Messenger."

2. The five daily prayers at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and nightfall. These five daily prayers help one to develop Allah consciousness in his/her everyday life. The importance of these cannot be over-emphasized. They are a constant reminder to the worshipper of the Presence and Power of

Allah and help the worshipper to keep himself from deviating from the Right Path.

3. The bestowal of charity on one's fellow man. Islam places great emphasis on generosity and charity as a means of purifying one's soul and getting closer to Allah. The Muslim is enjoined to give voluntarily whenever he/she can; however, he/she is required each year to pay an obligatory charity tax of two and a half percent of his/her annual net earnings that exceed necessities, to go to the poor and the needy, etc. The Zakat - charity - thus enables the Muslim community to take care of all its members and insures that no one will be deprived of his/her basic human right to exist.

4. Fasting during the ninth month of the lunar year 'Ramadan'. This fast is enjoined upon Muslims of good health and sound body who have attained the age of physical maturity and are not prevented from performing the fast by various circumstances like travel, sickness, mental illness, or specifically in the case of women, menstruation, or childbirth. The fast of Ramadan begins at dawn and last until sunset. During this period the Muslim abstains from eating, and drinking, sexual activity and smoking. Fasting teaches self discipline and control, while purifying the soul and body and strengthening one's consciousness of Allah.

5. The pilgrimage to Mecca. The pilgrimage is required of all Muslims at least once during their lifetime, if they have the financial means. The annual pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the greatest events of the Muslim world, uniting Muslims from every race and from every corner of the world. This is a great experience in the life of a Muslim which enables him to draw himself closer to Allah. We would like to remind the reader that the Holy Mosque in Mecca was built by Prophet Abraham and his son, the Prophet Ishmail, peace be upon them.

WHO IS A MUSLIM?

Since there is no priesthood in Islam, no clergy and no official religious institution, all one has to do to become a Muslim is to be personally convinced of the truth of what Islam teaches and bear witness that "There is no god except Allah, and that Muhammad is His Prophet."

One of the great beauties of Islam is its simplicity, its naturalness, and its lack of formalities. Islam is the religion of Adam and of mankind in its earliest and most advanced stages of development. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"So set your face to the religion of Islam as a man by nature upright, the nature of Allah with which He has inspired mankind and molded them. There is no changing to the creation of Allah. That is the right religion, but most men know not." (Qur'an 30:30)

THE BENEFIT OF EMBRACING ISLAM

Among the many benefits of embracing Islam are that once you bear witness that: "There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet," all your past sins are forgiven and all your past sins are transformed into merits! You also receive the reward of believing the religion of the Prophet Jesus, if you are a Christian, or Prophet Moses, if you are a Jew, and the religion of Prophet Muhammad, which means that you receive two rewards.

IN MEMORY OF SHAIKH KISHK

For those of you who do not already know, the Egyptian Shaikh, Abdul Hamid Kishk passed away on the 6th of December of 1996, at the age of 63. The Shaikh was very well known around the world for his fiery Jumu'a Khutbas (Friday Sermon) and his outspoken stance against injustice and oppression in the Muslim world.

Cassette recordings of his talks have been circulating throughout the world in Arabic speaking circles, and his knowledge, style and eloquence have driven man to change their lives. It is perhaps the mercy of Allah that he therefore passed away while in Sujood (prostration), on the day of Jumu'ah, as he prayed remembering the occasion of Isra and Miraj.

The Shaikh was born in 1933 in Shibrakheet, a small village near Alexandria, Egypt in a very poor family. His father passed away before Abdul Hamid reached schooling age. He joined one of the schools of Azhar and by the age of 8 had memorized the Qur'an. It was at this time that he was afflicted by an illness which took away his sight.

However, rather than demoralize him, the loss of his sight encouraged him to learn more and persevere further. He graduated as a scholar from the Faculty of Usul al-Din, in Azhar and was appointed as an Imam, giving Khutbas all over Egypt.

Around 1964 he took up the mimbar of 'Ain al-Hayat Mosque in Cairo as his platform and started to speak vociferously about the social conditions in Egypt and the suppression of the Islamic Movement. This didn't stop him from having a distinctly spiritual approach to life, something which his speeches reflect. In 1966 he was arrested and was imprisoned and tortured for two years.

When Shaikh Kishk was released in 1968, he didn't walk out of prison with his head bowed down to the Regime but became even more critical and energetic. Yet all the time his discourse was balanced and patient. Though he was arrested and released many times after this, it was over the next 10 years that most of his audio and video cassettes were recorded; more than 450 tapes are in circulation! His speeches became so popular that the mosque was extended 3 times to accommodate the congregation.

During 1981-82 the Shaikh was again imprisoned, but this time on his release he was forbidden to give any more speeches. Even this did not silence him, for up to 1996, this blind man wrote over 115 books and booklets, including a tafsir, (one of his book, on Angels, has been translated into English by Dar al-Taqwa, London).

The inspiration he gave to us all, the love and respect that people felt for him, will always keep his memory alive. I know that millions will pray for this noble and uncompromising man, but you too must pray for him.

May Allah forgive and bless the soul of the Shaikh.

HOW I EMBRACED ISLAM

FROM LA LA LAND TO ALLAH'S LAND

PAMELA BARRETT (1948 - 2006)



My background was typical California American growing up in the early sixties. My parents raised us five kids as Catholic, but with the divorce of my parents when I was 11, we kind of fell away from the church. In those years, it was very disgraceful to divorce so we felt like outcasts.

I never really felt connected to Christianity though, even as a child. It somehow never really made any sense to me and I detected inconsistencies even at an early age. I used to go to communion so I wouldn't have to answer questions during Catechism.

Well, in typical California style we were kind of left to raise ourselves after the divorce. There wasn't much in the way of guidance. Although my mom loved us a lot, she was suddenly the sole caregiver of five children. My dad I only saw about five or six times after that.

Left to our own devices, I was pregnant by the time I was 16 and ended up married to the father of my children. Pretty much a "shot-gun wedding" I'm afraid. We stayed married for 16 years and had two children.

I had missed out on the "hippie" thing when I had gotten married in 1964 when all that "drop out and drop acid" stuff was happening. To make this short, I ended up leaving after all those years and running away to San Francisco to "find out who I was" and become "liberated"!

What I found was liquor, drugs, sex, rock & roll. I was in such a hurry to "live" that I gave no thought to morality or anything like that...just a completely hedonistic approach to life.

I came to know about Islam through a young man newly

arrived in America. He was from a large family and was here alone and feeling quite lost with all the new experiences confronting him.

We found a comfort in each other as I was also alone without family or friends for the first time in my life. I began to respect some of the qualities I saw in him. He was very honest and never made excuses for himself. I saw a complete acceptance and confidence in him that I never experienced in anyone before.

He would tell me things about the Quran which were interesting to me. He was very low key and didn't ever pressure me in any way. I liked what I saw in him. The fact that he was honest really impressed me. I had never even thought that a person could survive in life in a clean and honest manner. He had me do Shahada the first time we were together even though I didn't have any idea what it was. Sometimes I think that even though I didn't know what I was saying...God did and took it seriously!

As a matter of fact, I was really afraid of Islam because I was afraid that God would make me boring and trapped if I was Muslim. I was so naive about Islam that my perceptions were really skewed. I carried all of the mis-information as many Americans.

What I had in the back of my sick mind was some correlation to the nuns I had seen as a child. They seemed to me to be trapped in a prison of morals. I remember always feeling that they were lonely and dull and all they could do was pray. That seemed to me to be an empty life. At that point anything that seemed "fun" was not allowed.

But God truly is great. Somehow, He gave me all the rope I needed to hang myself then ended up being there when I fell. Anyway, therein followed a few more years of "wandering in wilderness".

After my young man and I parted ways, I called the mosque and asked if I could get a copy of the Quran. I just wanted to know more about it. I never intended to "become" Muslim.

Well, when I read the very beginning of the Yusuf Ali edition, the summary actually, I just cried. I was awestruck by the beauty and mercy and grace. It touched me in a way that nothing else ever had.

When I read the Fatiha, I knew it was something very special but I was certainly not ready to accept or understand even a fragment of it. The beauty of its verses galvanized me. Many of the fundamental principles I just could not imagine ever agreeing with or understanding.

What most impressed me was the forgiveness and mercy. That incredible Graciousness of Allah. I was going to need lots of these blessings with the kind of life I was living and continued to live for several more years.

Even though I would read the Quran and gradually began to truly and deeply in my heart believe in it as the words of God, I still wasn't ready to give up my fast and loose lifestyle. I was certainly very much like a baby taking baby steps into an unknown world.

I was recently asked, "How difficult was it to suddenly stop and give up many of the things you had been doing when you became Muslim?" It wasn't difficult because I didn't suddenly give up anything!

It took me five years from the time I first started reading the Quran to make the conscious decision to stop eating pork! My family was Italian, so pork was a mainstay of our cuisine. But when I said to myself after five years of reading the Quran that maybe I should give it up because Allah had prescribed it to us as unclean, it was very difficult

It took me about a year of eating it and feeling guilty before it began to make me sick when I ate it. Now, I just look at the salami in the supermarket and say, "Well, it's a small thing Allah asks of us".

That's how I feel about Ramadan. I asked someone what is the first thing they think of when they realize Ramadan is coming.

They said the first thing is, "Oh, Aghhhh!", then right after that is, "Oh, Yea!" That's what I think too. That feeling of anxiety, I guess because we know we are facing a challenge and fearful that we might fail. As humans we cannot be sinless, but surely we can sin less."

And then we think of that sweet feeling upon breaking fast at the proper time and knowing that you have offered up to Allah one more day in honor of your devotion to Him... because it is a small thing that He asks of us - to fast for one month only - to really try for one month only to follow his path in a very concentrated and focused way.

Sometimes when I feel temptation during Ramadan, I say that to myself..."it's a small thing He asks of us" and He grants us so much mercies and forgiveness.

Liquor, promiscuity, stealing, lying, cheating, etc... have slowly departed over the course of these thirteen years. Now when I think back I can't even imagine that the person behaving that way was me. It is so different from who I am today. Liquor brought me to my knees and Allah was there to help me back up.

I had disappointed my children and certainly was a poor role model for them. But Mash'Allah, they both have the Holy Quran in their homes today and see the different person I have become because of my most sincere and deep belief in it. My grand daughters believe in Allah and always want to hear "God Stories".

My father has passed on, but my mother is surprisingly tolerant towards my belief in Islam. Although sometimes I think she thinks it is 'just a phase'. My brothers and

sisters all are respectful towards my beliefs although they too have many of the misconceptions and stereotypes of many Americans.

One thing I had a great problem with when I finally accepted that I was becoming Muslim was some of the attitudes of the Muslims I met. I would occasionally try to go to the Mosque but was usually disheartened by the questions or instructions I would receive from brothers and sisters there.

Usually, the first question is, "Who is your husband?" If I said that I didn't have one, I was viewed with suspicion and usually no one would talk to me after that. I was told that Allah would not accept my prayers because I was wearing nail polish. That can be very discouraging for someone seeking knowledge and contact with Allah and the Islamic community.

I was instructed to do some very unusual things which I found odd to say the least. It took me about seven years to differentiate between "cultural customs" and Islamic practices.

I know from other converts I have talked with they have had similar experiences. But, there are the sweet memories of praying alongside my sisters during Ramadan or Jumah when I feel so close to Allah that I weep with gratitude for the gift He gave me of the Quran and Islam.

I sometimes see this journey as one Allah has chosen for me and which He isn't going to let me out of! Of course, I have come to be very grateful for His patience and tolerance for my weakness. Allah has never backed out on the promises in the Quran. That's how I see it. If it seems disrespectful to someone else, I apologize, but my faith in Allah is at the deepest core of my being and today guides my life.

I still have many goals which I wish to achieve with my faith. I have come to accept my belief in Islam as a progression, a journey, a seed that was planted and has grown into a strong and living presence in my soul. I am not perfect, but I believe that I am a better Muslim this year than I was last year.

I know by the number of things that I have left behind that were not pleasing to Allah. I know with each passing Ramadan because I can look back at my first weak attempts at fasting and realize that I can look forward to this month and that Allah will be there to help me through the weak moments.

My children respect me. I honor my mother as Allah asks of us. I have come to accept the difficulties in my life as opportunities for Allah to strengthen me or let me practice patience or tolerance... or to "grow" me in some way.

For me, embracing Islam has been the single greatest gift ever granted to me. I am still grateful and awestruck by it.

LETTER TO CAESAR

THE HOLY PROPHET'S LETTER TO HIRAQL (CAESAR) EMPEROR OF THE ROMANS INVITING HIM TO ISLAM

It was narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas who learned the tradition personally from Abu Sufyan. The latter said:

I went out (on a mercantile venture) during the period (of truce) between me and the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him). While I was in Syria, the letter of the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) was handed over to Hiraql (Caesar), the Emperor of Rome (who was on a visit to Jerusalem at that time). The letter was brought by Dihya Kalbi who delivered it to the governor of Basra, and the governor passed it on to Caesar.

(On receiving the letter) Caesar held a grand court. He donned a Crown and sat on his throne and said: 'Is there anyone from the people of this man who thinks that he is a prophet?' People said: 'Yes.'

So I was called along with a few others from the Quraysh. We were admitted to Caesar and he seated us before him. He asked: 'Which of you has the closest kinship with the man who thinks that he is a prophet?' Abu Sufyan said: 'I.' So they seated me in front of him and seated my companions behind me. Then he called his interpreter and said to him: 'Tell them that I am going to ask this fellow (i.e. Abu Sufyan) about the man who thinks that he is a prophet. If he tells me a lie, then refute him.' Abu Sufyan told (the narrator): 'By God, had there not been the fear that falsehood would be imputed to me, I would have lied.'

(Then) Caesar said to his interpreter: 'Inquire from him about his ancestry.'

I said: 'He is of good ancestry among us.'

He asked: 'Has there been a king among his ancestors?'

I said: 'No.'

He asked: 'Did you accuse him of falsehood before he proclaimed his prophethood?'

I said: 'No.'

He asked: 'Who are his followers - people of high status or low status?'

I said: '(They are) of low status.'

He asked: 'Are they increasing in number or decreasing?'

I said: 'No, they are rather increasing.'

He asked: 'Does anyone give up his religion, being dissatisfied with it, after having embraced it?'

I said: 'No.'

He asked: 'Have you been at war with him?'

I said: 'Yes.'

He asked: 'How did you fare in that war?'

I said: 'The war between us and him has been wavering like a bucket, up at one turn and down at the other (i.e. the victory has been shared between us and him by turns).'

He asked: 'Has he (ever) violated his covenant?'

I said: 'No.'

He asked: 'Did anyone make the proclamation (of prophethood) before him?'

I said 'No.'

He now said to his interpreter: 'Tell him - I asked him about his ancestry and he replied that he had the best ancestry. This is the case with prophets; they are the descendants of the noblest among their people.'

(Addressing Abu Sufyan,) he continued:

'I asked you if there had been a king among his ancestors. You said that there had been none. If there had been a king among his ancestors, I would have said that he was a man demanding his ancestral kingdom.'

'I asked you about his followers, whether they were people of high or low status, and you said that they were of rather low status. Such are the followers of the prophets.'

'I asked you whether you used to accuse him of falsehood before he proclaimed his prophethood, and you said that you did not. So I have understood that when he did not allow himself to tell a lie about the people, he would never go to the length of forging a falsehood about Allah.'

'I asked you whether anyone renounced his religion being dissatisfied with it after he had embraced it, and you replied in the negative. Faith is like this when it enters the depths of the heart (it perpetuates them).'

'I asked you whether his followers were increasing or decreasing. You said they were increasing. Faith is like this until it reaches its consummation.'

'I asked you whether you had been at war with him, and you replied that you had been and that the victory between you and him had been shared by turns, sometimes he suffering loss at your hand and sometimes you suffering loss at his. This is how the prophets are tried before the final victory is theirs.

'I asked you whether he (ever) violated his covenant, and you said that he did not. This is how the prophets behave. They never violate (their covenants).'

'I asked you whether anyone before him had proclaimed the same thing, and you replied in the negative. I said: If anyone had made the same proclamation before, I would have thought that he was a man following what had been proclaimed before.'

(Then) he asked: 'What does he enjoin upon you?' I said: 'He exhorts us to offer Salat, to pay Zakat, to show due regard to kinship, and to practice chastity.'

He said: 'If what you have told about him is true, he is certainly a prophet. I knew that he was to appear, but I did not think that he would be from among you. If I knew that I would be able to reach him, I would love to meet him; and if I had been with him, I would have washed his feet (out of reverence). His dominion will certainly extend to this place which is under my feet.'

Then he called for the letter of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and read it. The letter ran as follows:

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious and Most Merciful

Peace be on him, who follows the right path. From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, to Hiraql, the Emperor of the Romans.

After this, I invite you to the fold of Islam. Therefore, if you desire security, accept Islam.

If you accept Islam, Allah shall reward you double and if you refuse to do so, the responsibility for the transgression of the entire nation, shall be yours. O people of the Book, come to the word that is common between us, that we should worship none other than Allah, should not ascribe any partner to Him, and that none of us should take their fellows as Lords other than Allah.

If you deny this, you must know that we believe in Oneness of Allah, in all circumstances.

Seal: Allah's Prophet Muhammad



The dialogue of Caesar, with Abu Sufyan, highly enraged the courtiers. The Caesar, therefore, sent away the Arabs from the court. The love of crown and throne and the opposition of the courtiers, however, did not allow Caesar to accept Islam.

But his searching questions and his talk clearly show that he was convinced of the truthfulness of Islam, as he had correctly judged that a person who never in his life, uttered even a trifling lie, could hardly say anything wrong about Allah.

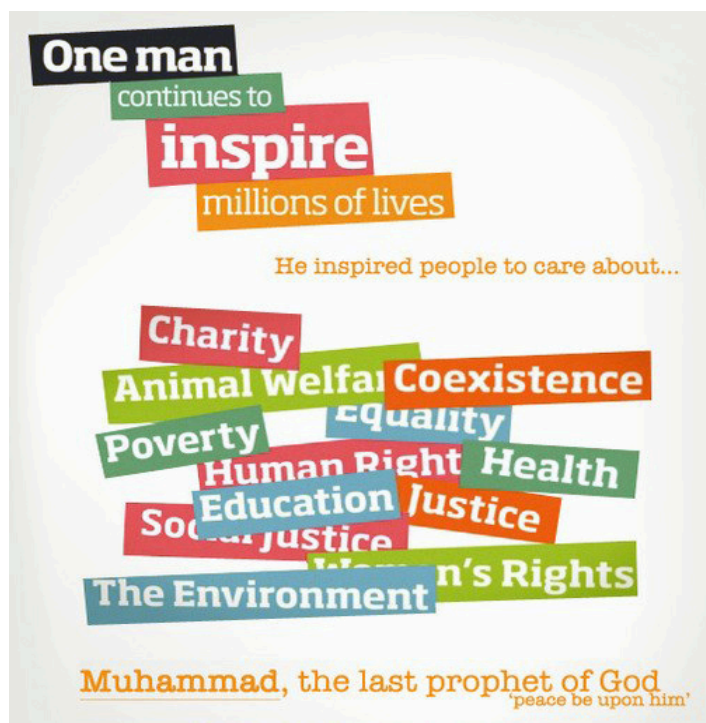
He was also certain that worldly riches, splendor, and ascendancy were not the aims and objects of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.), but the communication of the message of Islam to the entire world, was his mission.

When Caesar was about to return to Constantinople, he again advised his courtiers to follow the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) as he was the one, they were awaiting. He further mentioned that their books contained the description of the Holy Prophet, Muhammad (S.A.W.), and these clearly and unequivocally indicate that he was the true Prophet of Allah.

It was, therefore, in their own interest to follow the guidance given by the Holy Prophet (S. A. W.).

However, the courtiers, said that it would mean their acceptance of the lordship of the Arabs, although their's was the biggest kingdom of the world and their nation the greatest nation of the world. Caesar, thereon, said that although they were not prepared to accept Islam then very shortly they would be overpowered by the Arabs.

He was much displeased by the arrogant attitude of the courtiers and immediately left Syria. While departing, he looked at the Syrian territory and said that he was leaving Syria for ever. And it was true, he never returned to Syria.



COOK'S CORNER

CHICKEN CURRY

by Ayesha Buksh

Ingredients:

- 1 cut-up chicken (3-4 lbs)
- 1 medium chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons crushed garlic - 1 tablespoon crushed ginger - 1/2 tablespoon black pepper - Crushed chili
- Salt to taste
- 2 medium chopped tomatoes - 3 tablespoons oil

Preparation:

1. Fry onion in oil until light brown.
2. Add ginger & garlic, fry 1 minute.
3. Add chicken and rest of seasoning & tomatoes
4. Cook on medium heat until chicken is done
5. Add 1/2 cup of water.
6. Garnish with cilantro.

Serve over rice. Enjoy

BIOLOGY

The Muslim scientists made considerable progress in biology especially in botany, and developed horticulture to a high degree of perfection.

They paid greater attention to botany in comparison to zoology. Botany reached its zenith in Spain. In zoology the study of the horse was developed almost to the rank of a science. Abu Ubaidah (728 - 825 A. D.) who wrote more than 100 books, devoted more than fifty books to the study of the horse.

Al-Jahiz, who flourished in Basra is reputed to be one of the greatest zoologists the Muslim world has produced. His influence in the subject may be traced to the Persian 'Al-Qazwini' and the Egyptian 'Al-Damiri'. His book 'Kitab al Hayawan' (book of animals) contains germs of later theories of evolution, adaptation, and animal psychology. He was the first to note changes in bird life through migrations. He described the method of obtaining 'ammonia from animal fat by dry distilling'.

Al-Damiri, who died in 1405 in Cairo and who was influenced by Al-Jahiz is the greatest Arab zoologist. His book Hayat Al Hayawan (Life of animal) is the most important Muslim work in zoology. It is an encyclopedia on animal life containing a mine of information on the subject. It contains the history of animals and preceded Buffon by 700 years.

Al-Masudi has given the rudiments of the theory of evolution in his well known work Meadows of gold. Another of his works Kitab al-Tanbih wal Ishraq advances his views on evolution namely from mineral to plant, from plant to animal and from animal to man.

In botany Spanish Muslims made the greatest contribution, and some of them are known as the greatest botanists of mediaeval times. They were keen observers and discovered sexual difference between such plants as palms and hemps. They roamed about on sea shores, on mountains and in distant lands in quest of rare botanical herbs. They classified plants into those that grow from seeds, those that grow from cuttings and those that grow of their own accord, i.e., wild growth. The Spanish Muslims advanced in botany far beyond the state in which it had been left by Dioscorides and augmented the herbology of the Greeks by the addition of 2,000 plants. Regular botanical gardens existed in Cordoba, Baghdad, Cairo, and Fez for teaching and experimental purposes. Some of these were the finest in the world

The Cordovan physician, Al-Ghafiq (D. 1165) was a renowned botanist, who collected plants in Spain and Africa, and described them most accurately. According to G. Sarton he was the greatest expert of his time on simples. His description of plants was the most precise ever made in Islam; he gave the names of each in Arabic, Latin, and Berber. His

outstanding work *Al Adwiyah al Mufradah* dealing with simples was later appropriated by Ibn Baytar.

Abu Zakariya Yahya Ibn Muhammad Ibn Al-Awwan, who flourished at the end of 12 century in Seville (Spain), was the author of the most important Islamic treatise on agriculture during the mediaeval times entitled '*Kitab al Filahah*'. The book treats more than 585 plants and deals with the cultivation of more than 50 fruit trees. It also discusses numerous diseases of plants and suggests their remedies. The book presents new observations on properties of soil and different types of manures.

Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn al-Baytar, was the greatest botanist and pharmacist of Spain--in fact the greatest of mediaeval times. He roamed about in search of plants and collected herbs on the Mediterranean littoral, from Spain to Syria, described more than 1,400 medical drugs and compared them with the records of more than 150 ancient and Arabian authors. The collection of simple drugs composed by him is the most outstanding botanical work in Arabic. This book, in fact is the most important for the whole period extending from Dioscorides down to the 16th century. It is an encyclopedic work on the subject. He later entered into the service of the Ayyubid king, al-Malik al-Kamil, as his chief herbalist in Cairo. From there he traveled through Syria and Asia Minor, and died in Damascus. One of his works *Al-Mughani-fi al Adwiyah al Mufradah* deals with medicine. The other *Al Jami Ji al Adwiyah al Mufradah* is a very valuable book containing simple remedies regarding animal, vegetable and mineral matters which has been described above. It deals also with 200 novel plants which were not known up to that time. Abul Abbas Al-Nabati also wandered along the African Coast from Spain to Arabia in search of herbs and plants. He discovered some rare plants on the shore of Red Sea.

Another botanist Ibn Sauri, was accompanied by an artist during his travels in Syria, who made sketches of the plants which they found. Ibn Wahshiya, wrote his celebrated work *al-Filahah al-Nabatiyah* containing valuable information about animals and plants.

Many Cosmo graphical encyclopedias have been written by Arabs and Persians, which contain sections on animals, plants and stones, of which the best known is that of Zakariya al-Kawini, who died in 1283 A. D. Al-Dinawari wrote an excellent book of plants and al-Bakri has written a book describing in detail the '*Plants of Andalusia*'.

Ibn Maskawaih, a contemporary of Al-Beruni, advanced a definite theory about evolution. According to him plant life at its lowest stage of evolution does not need any seed for its birth and growth. Nor does it perpetuate its species by means of the seed.

The great advancement of botanical science in Spain led to the development of agriculture and horticulture on a grand scale. "Horticulture improvements" says G. Sarton, "constituted the finest legacies of Islam, and the gardens of Spain proclaim to this day one of the noblest virtues of her Muslim conquerors. The development of agriculture was one of the glories of Muslim Spain."

SAYINGS OF THE PROPHET (S.A.W.)

TRUST - Trust in God - but tie your camel first.

THE WORLD - Treat this world as I do, like a wayfarer, like a horseman who stops in the shade of a tree for a time, and then moves on.

OBJECTS - It is your attachment to objects which make you blind and deaf.

SLEEP - Sleep is the brother of death.

REFLECTION - The faithful are mirrors, one to the other.

WOMEN - Women are the twin-halves of men.

PRIVACY - Whoever invades people's privacy corrupts them.

WIVES - A virtuous wife is the best treasure any man can have.

OPPRESSION - When oppression exists, even the bird dies in its nest.

LOVE - Do you think you love your Creator? Love your fellow-creature first.

DISTRIBUTION - God it is who gives: I am only a distributor.

HELPING OTHERS - I order you to assist any oppressed person, whether he is a Muslim or not.

MONKISHNESS - No Monks in Islam.

THE PIOUS - My back has been broken by 'pious' men.

CURSING - You ask me to curse unbelievers. But I was not sent to curse.

TEACHING - One hour's teaching is better than a whole night of prayer.

DAY AND NIGHT - The night is long: do not shorten it by sleep. The day is fair: do not darken it with wrongdoing.

HUMILITY - Humility and courtesy are themselves a part of piety.

ENVY - Envy devours good deeds, as a fire devours fuel.

THE LEARNED - Whoever honors the learned, honors me.

POVERTY - My poverty is my pride.

DEATH - Die before your death.

THE TONGUE - A man slips with his tongue more than with his feet.

DESIRE - Desire not the world, and God will love you. Desire not what others have, and they will love you.

PRIDE AND GENEROSITY - Pride in ancestry is really a property -interest. Generosity is a variety of piety.

PRACTICE - Who are the learned? Those who put into practice what they know.

KINDNESS - Whoever has no kindness has no faith.

PRINCES AND SCHOLARS - The best of princes is one who visits the wise. The worst of scholars is one who visits princes.

THE JUDGE - A man appointed to be a judge has been killed with-out a knife.

STRUGGLE - The holy warrior is him who struggles with himself.

INK AND BLOOD - The ink of the learned is holier than the blood of the martyr.

CONTEMPLATION - An hour's contemplation is better than a year's worship.

UNDERSTANDING - Speak to everyone in accordance with his degree of understanding.

FOOD - Nobody has eaten better food than that won by his own labor.

WORK - I am a worker.

ACCUSATIONS - Anyone reviling a brother for a sin will not himself die before committing it.

PARADISE - I will stand surety for Paradise if you save yourselves from six things: telling untruths, violating promises, dishonoring trust, being unchaste in thought and act, striking the first blow, taking what is bad and unlawful.

TASKS - Whoever makes all his tasks one task (i.e. the Hereafter), God will help him in his other concerns.

POETRY - In some poetry there is wisdom.

LIES, PROMISES, TRUST - He is not of mine who lies, breaks a promise or fails in his trust.

THOUGHTS - Good thoughts are a part of worship.

VISION OF THE FAITHFUL - The Faithful see with the light of God.

SOME BEHAVIOR - I am like a man who has lighted a fire, and all the creeping things have rushed to burn themselves in it.

THE QUR'AN - The Qur'an has been revealed in seven forms. Each verse has inner and outer meaning.

OBLIGATION TO LEARN - The pursuit of knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim.

THE YOUNG IN PARADISE - Old women will not enter Paradise: they will be young and beautiful first.

A JOURNEY - On a journey, the lord of a people is their servant.

RECOGNITION - Souls which recognize one another congregate together; those which do not, argue with one another.

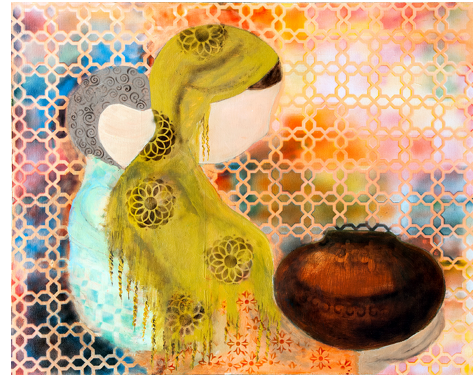
TRUTH - Speaking the truth to the unjust is the best of holy wars.

KNOWLEDGE - Journey even as far as China seeking knowledge.

THE TIME WILL COME - The time will come when you are divided into 72 sects. A group among you will be my people, the people of Salvation.

THE BEQUEST - I have nothing to leave you except my family.

WOMEN IN ISLAM



A woman's economic rights are taken for granted today. However, such rights are fairly new in much of the world.

Women in Arabia before the time of Muhammad (PBUH) were considered chattel. Infant girls were often buried alive to spare the family's honor, and widows were inherited along with other items of property. Indeed, this was the common lot of women around the world.

In Persia, women were under the complete authority of men, and could be bought and sold; in India, a faithful wife was one who served her husband as if he were a god, addressing him as "lord," eating his leftovers, and upon his death being burned alive atop his corpse; and even in Rome, whose law was regarded as more civilized, a woman was forced to remain financially dependent all her life, with no separate or independent right.

The beginning of the Islamic era ushered in a revolutionary change in the status of women. Islam decreed a right of which woman was deprived, not only in the pre-Islamic era, but up until quite recently even in the West: the right of independent ownership.

According to Islamic law, a woman has full rights in her money, real estate, and other assets. These rights undergo no change when she gets married, and she retains her full rights in buying, selling, and mortgage, as well as in the signing of contracts for rent, enterprise, etc.

Islam regards the married woman's role as wife and mother as the most essential one, and a woman is entitled to financial maintenance by her husband. However, a woman may also work and earn an income if there is an economic need. Since there is nothing in Islamic law that forbids a woman to work, she may do so when there is a necessity for it. This is especially so in the case of occupations needed most by society, such as teaching and medicine, although there is no restriction on benefitting from a woman's scarce talents in any field. Indeed, although a woman's occupying the position of judge has been seen by many people as unsuited to a woman's nature, we see some early Muslim jurists finding nothing wrong with it.

In addition, whereas prior to the institution of Shariah (Islamic law) a woman could be inherited, Shariah forbade this practice and gave her instead the right to inheritance. Her share is completely hers, and no one, including her husband, can take it away from her.

"Unto the men (of the family) belongs a share of that which parents and near kindred leave, and unto women a share of that which parents and near kindred leave, whether it be little or much - a legal share." (Qur'an 4:7)

THE WISDOM IN ISLAM

Dear Readers,

'Wisdom In Islam' encompasses in its radiant words the true goals that all of us must strive for. Its bounty of mercy, forgiveness, and guidance is stunning in its clarity. If perhaps each of us would make the commitment to practice these principles for even one day we would feel the power and grace of Allah working in our lives. Imagine using this wonderful guidance on a regular basis? It is especially important during this month of Ramadan to endeavor to practice and then to invite others to practice these beautiful words of wisdom.

Khalid ibn El Waleed narrated the following hadith:

A Bedouin came one day to the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and said to him, "O, Messenger of Allah! I've come to ask you a few questions about the affairs of this life and the Hereafter."

- Ask what you wish.

- I'd like to be the most learned of men.

- Fear Allah, and you will be the most learned of men.

- I wish to be the richest man in the world.

- Be contented, and you will be the richest man in the world.

- I'd like to be the most just man.

- Desire for others what you desire for yourself, and you will be the most just of men.

- I want to be the best of men.

- Do good to others and you will be the best of men.

- I wish to be the most favored by Allah.

- Engage much in Allah's praise, and you will be most favored by Him.

- I'd like to complete my faith.

- If you have good manners you will complete your faith.

- I wish to be among those who do good.

- Adore Allah as if you see Him. If you don't see Him, He seeth you. In this way you will be among those who do good.

- I wish to be obedient to Allah.

- I'd like to be free from all sins.

- Bathe yourself from impurity and you will be free from all sins.

- I'd like to be raised on the Day of Judgment in the light.

- Don't wrong yourself or any other creature, and you will be raised on the Day of Judgment in the light.

- I'd like Allah to bestow His mercy on me.

- If you have mercy on yourself and on others, Allah will grant you mercy on the Day of Judgment.

- I'd like my sins to be very few.

- If you seek the forgiveness of Allah as much as you can, your sins will be very few.

- I'd like to be the most honorable man.

- If you do not complain to any fellow creature, you will be the most honorable of men.

- I'd like to be the strongest of men.

- If you put your trust in Allah, you be the strongest of men.

- I'd like to enlarge my provision.

- If you keep yourself pure, Allah will enlarge your provision.

- I'd like to be loved by Allah and His messenger.

- If you love what Allah and His messenger love you will be among their beloved ones.

- I wish to be safe from Allah's wrath on the Day of Judgment.

- If you do not lose your temper with any of your fellow creatures, you will be safe from the wrath of Allah on the Day of Judgment.

- I'd like my prayers to be responded.

- If you avoid forbidden actions your prayers will be responded.

- I'd like Allah not to disgrace me on the Day of Judgment.

- If you guard your chastity, Allah will not disgrace you on the Day of Judgment.

- I'd like Allah to provide me with a protective covering on the Day of Judgment.

- Do not uncover your fellow creatures faults, and Allah will provide you with a covering protection on the Day of Judgment.

- What will save me from sins?

- Tears, humility and illness.

- What are the best deeds in the eyes of Allah?

- Gentle manners, modesty and patience.

- What are the worst evils in the eyes of Allah?

- Hot temper and miserliness.

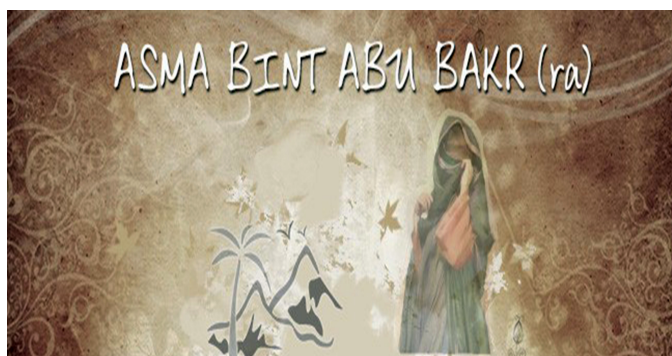
- What assuages the wrath of Allah in this life and in the Hereafter?

- Concealed charity and kindness to relatives.

- What extinguishes hell's fires on the Day of Judgment?

- Patience in adversity and misfortunes.

Imam El Mustaghfiri said: "I have never heard a tradition more comprehensive of the beauties of religion, and more beneficial than this hadith. It collects all the good things of Islam but not put to use." (Related by Imam Ibn Hambal)



ASMAA BINT ABU BAKR

Asmaa bint Abu Bakr belonged to a distinguished Muslim family. Her father, Abu Bakr, was a close friend of the Prophet (pbuh) and the first Khalifah after his death. Her half-sister, Aishah, was a wife of the Prophet. Her husband, Zubayr ibn al Awwam, was one of the special personal aides of the Prophet (pbuh). Her son, Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr, became well-known for his incorruptibility and his unswerving devotion to Truth.

Asmaa herself was one of the first persons to accept Islam. Only about 17 persons including both men and women became Muslims before her. She was later given the nickname, Dhat an-Nitaqayn (the One with the Two Waistbands), because of an incident connected with the departure of the Prophet (pbuh) and her father from Mecca on the historic hijrah to Madinah.

Asmaa was one of the few persons who knew of the Prophet's plan to leave for Madinah. The utmost secrecy had to be maintained because of the Quraysh plans to murder the Prophet (SAW). On the night of their departure, she prepared a bag of food and a water container for their journey. She did not find anything though with which to tie the containers and decided to use her waistband. Abu Bakr suggested that she tear it into two. This she did and the Prophet (SAW) commended her action. From then on she became known as "the One with the Two Waistbands".

When the final emigration from Mecca to Madinah took place soon after the departure of the Prophet (pbuh), Asmaa was pregnant. She did not let her pregnancy or the prospect of a long and arduous journey deter her from leaving. As soon as she reached Quba on the outskirts of Madinah, she gave birth to a son, Abdullah. The Muslims shouted in happiness and thanksgiving because this was the first child to be born to the muhajireen in Madinah.

Asmaa became known for her fine and noble qualities and for the keenness of her intelligence. She was an extremely generous person. Her son Abdullah once said of her, "I have not seen two women more generous than my aunt Aishah and my mother Asmaa. But their generosity was expressed in different ways. My aunt would accumulate one thing after another until she had gathered what she felt was sufficient and then distributed it all to those in need. My mother, on the other hand, would not keep anything even for the morrow."

Asmaa's presence of mind in difficult circumstances was remarkable. When her father left Mecca, he took all his wealth, amounting to some 6,000 dirhams, and did not leave any for his family. When Abu Bakr's father, Abu Quhafah heard of his departure he went to his house and said to her: "I understand that he has left you no money after he has abandoned you." "No, grandfather," replied Asmaa, "in fact he has left us much money." She took some pebbles and put them in a small recess in the wall where they used to put money. She

threw a cloth over the heap and took the hand of her grandfather—he was blind—and said, "See how much money he has left us." Through this stratagem, Asmaa wanted to allay the fears of the old man and to forestall him from giving them anything of his own wealth. This was because she disliked receiving any assistance even if it was her own grandfather.

Asmaa had an attitude and was not inclined to compromise her honor and her faith. Her mother, Qutaylah, once came to visit her in Madinah. She was not a Muslim. Her mother brought her gifts of raisins, clarified butter and qaraz (pods of a species of tree). Asmaa at first refused to admit her into her house or accept the gifts. She sent someone to Aishah to ask the Prophet (pbuh), about her attitude to her mother and he replied that she should certainly admit her to her house and accept the gifts. On this occasion, the following revelation came to the Prophet (pbuh):

"God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: For God loves those who are just. God only forbids you with regard to those who fight you for (your) Faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong." (Qur'an Al-Mumtahanah 60: 8-9)

For Asmaa and indeed for many other Muslims, life in Madinah was rather difficult at first. Her husband was quite poor and his only major possession to begin with was a horse he had bought. She described these early days: "I used to provide fodder for the horse, give it water and groom it. I would grind grain and make dough but I could not bake well. The women of the Ansar used to bake for me. They were truly good women. I used to carry the grain on my head from az-Zubayr's plot which the Prophet (pbuh) had allocated to him to cultivate. It was about three farsakh (about eight kilometers) from the town's center. One day I was on the road carrying the grain on my head when I met the Prophet (pbuh) and a group of Sahabah. He called out to me and stopped his camel so that I could ride behind him. I felt embarrassed to travel with the Prophet (pbuh) and also remembered Zubayr's jealousy—he was the most jealous of men. The Prophet (pbuh) realized that I was embarrassed and rode on." Later, Asmaa related to Zubayr exactly what had happened and he said, "By God, that you should have to carry grain is far more distressing to me than your riding with (the Prophet)."

Asmaa obviously then was a person of great sensitivity and devotion. She and her husband worked extremely hard together until their situation of poverty gradually changed. At times, however, Zubayr treated her harshly. Once she went to her father and complained to him about this. His reply to her was: "My daughter, have sabr (patience) for if a woman has a righteous husband and he dies and she does not marry after him, they will be brought together again in Paradise."

Zubayr eventually became one of the richest men among the Sahabah but Asmaa did not allow this to corrupt her principles. Her son, al-Mundhir once sent her an elegant dress from Iraq made of fine and costly material. Asmaa by this time was blind. She felt the material and said, "It's awful. Take it back to him." Al-Mundhir was upset and said, "Mother, it was not transparent." "It may not be transparent", she retorted, "but it is too tight-fitting and shows the contours of the body." Al-Mundhir bought another dress that met with her approval and she accepted it.

If the above incidents and aspects of Asmaa's life may easily be forgotten, then her final meeting with her son, Abdullah, must remain one of the most unforgettable moments in early Muslim history. At that meeting she demonstrated the keenness of her intelligence, her resoluteness, and the strength of her faith.

Abdullah was in the running for the Caliphate after the death of Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah. The Hijaz, Egypt, Iraq, Khurasan and much of Syria were favorable to him and acknowledged him as the Caliph. The Umayyads, however, continued to contest the Caliphate and to field a massive army under the command of Al- Hajjaj. Relentless battles were fought between the two sides during which Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr displayed great acts of courage and heroism. Many of his supporters however could not withstand the continuous strain of battle and gradually began to desert him. Finally he sought refuge in the Sacred Mosque at Mecca. It was then that he went to his mother, now an old blind woman, and said: "Peace be on you, Mother, and the mercy and blessings of God." "Unto you be peace, Abdullah," she replied. "What is it that brings you here at this hour while boulders from Hajjaj's catapults are raining down on your soldiers in the Haram and shaking the houses of Mecca?" "I came to seek your advice," he said. "To seek my advice?" she asked in astonishment. "About what?" "The people have deserted me out of fear of Hajjaj or being tempted by what he has to offer. Even my children and my family have left me. There is only a small group of men with me now and however strong and steadfast they are they can only resist for an hour or two more. Messengers of the Banu Umayyah (the Umayyads) are now negotiating with me, offering to give me whatever worldly possessions I want, should I lay down my arms and swear allegiance to Abdul Malik ibn Marwan. What do you think?" Raising her voice, she replied: "It's your affair, Abdullah, and you know yourself better. If however you think you are right and that you are standing up for the Truth, then persevere and fight on as your companions who were killed under your flag had shown perseverance. If however you desire the world, what a miserable wretch you are. You would have destroyed yourself and you would have destroyed your men." "But I will be killed today; there is no doubt about it." "That is better for you than that you should surrender yourself to Hajjaj voluntarily and that some minions of Banu Umayyah should play with your head." "I do not fear death. I am only afraid that they will mutilate me." "There is nothing after death that man should be afraid of. Skinning does not cause any pain to the slaughtered sheep."

Abdullah's face beamed as he said: "What a blessed mother! Blessed be your noble qualities! I have come to you at this hour to hear what I have heard. God knows that I have not weakened or despaired. He is witness over me that I have not stood up for what I have out of love for this world and its attractions but only out of anger for the sake of God. His limits have been transgressed. Here am I, going to what is pleasing to you. So if I am killed, do not grieve for me and commend me to God." "I shall grieve for you," said the ageing but resolute Asmaa, "only if you are killed in a vain and unjust cause." "Be assured that your son has not supported an unjust cause, nor committed any detestable deed, nor done any injustice to a Muslim or a Dhimmī and that there is nothing better in his sight than the pleasure of God, the Mighty, the Great. I do not say this to exonerate myself. God knows that I have only said it to make your heart firm and steadfast.

"Praise be to God who has made you act according to what He likes and according to what I like. Come close to me, my son, that I may smell and feel your body for this might be the last meeting with you." Abdullah knelt before her. She hugged him and smothered his head, his face and his neck with kisses. Her hands began to squeeze his body when suddenly she withdrew them and asked: "What is this you are wearing, Abdullah?" "This is my armor plate." "This, my son, is not the dress of one who desires martyrdom. Take it off. That will make your movements lighter and quicker. Wear instead the sirwal (a long under garment) so that if you are killed your 'awrah will not be exposed." Abdullah took off his armor plate and put on the sirwal. As he left for the Haram to join the fighting he said:

"My mother, don't deprive me of your du'a (prayer)."

Raising her hands to heaven, she prayed: "O Lord, have mercy on his staying up for long hours and his loud crying in the darkness of the night while people slept...." "O Lord, have mercy on his hunger and his thirst on his journeys from Madinah and Mecca while he fasted...." "O Lord, bless his righteousness to his mother and his father...." "O Lord, I commend him to Your cause and I am pleased with whatever You decree for him. And grant me for his sake the reward of those who are patient and who persevere."

By sunset, Abdullah was dead. Just over ten days later, his mother joined him. She was a hundred years old. Age had not made her infirm nor blunted the keenness of her mind

May Allah's blessings be upon Asmaa bint Abu Bakr!

EID STAMP

ALHAMMDULILAH EID STAMPS ARE NOW AVAILABLE FOR SALE AT POST OFFICES NATIONWIDE

WASHINGTON D.C. - In October of 2001, before the month of Ramadan of that year, the Postal Service of the United States brought to light the Eid stamp. This marks the end of a successful campaign led by the American Muslim Council to have a stamp for Ramadan. AMC (American Muslim Council) also took part in the campaign to have a stamp of Malcolm X in 1999.



Behind this great effort was our sister Aminah Assilmi, who died in a car accident near Newport, TN. after returning from a speech in New York. Sister Aminah, at the age of 65, had been an activist. She helped change the way many non-Muslims and even Muslims see Islam and the beautiful treatment it does provide for the believing women" said Estes. Sister Aminah was the acting Director of IUMW (International Union of Muslim Women).

One of her greatest achievements was being instrumental in the movement to get the U.S. Postal Service to issue the official "Eid" stamp in 2001. "Eids" (celebrations) of Islam for Muslims.

May Allah have mercy on her, grant her peace in her grave, raise her with the righteous on the Day of Judgement and give her Paradise, and make it easy for her children, ameen"